1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

846 firewood. When they bring something, the mother thanks them saying, You have provided very well. She who brought supplies sits down and takes the baby and asks whether it is doing well. Conversing with the mother, she advises her how to attend to the baby, and then she returns the baby to its mother and bids her good-bye, saying, May you rest well. The mother replies *E-e-e*. Then she goes out and goes away. All who come do that. During all that time the mother cannot go out until the navel has healed. Then some day when another gives birth, she will do likewise, she will prepare food to go and greet the parent.'

853 *The Baby's Food, Drink, and Medicine.* 'From the time the baby is born they set its gruel (*ekela*) (on the fire), and when it is done they begin to feed (it to him). It is difficult to feed a baby because he struggles greatly, and so when they feed him they hold his little arms and legs and put the food in his mouth when he cries. The mother takes the gruel from the pot and first puts it in her own mouth to cool it with her saliva, then she takes it out and, with the crook of her finger, puts it into the baby's mouth. If the baby's mouth fills up and runs over, she wipes it up and throws it back again. When she sees that sleep has taken him away, she sucks the gruel from the child's mouth and spits it out on the floor. Then she wipes his face clean with a little water. This gruel is stirred up with unfermented beer (*ocisangua*) in place of water that it may be tasty.

757 853 'Likewise from the time of his birth they set aside for the baby a little gourd or pot of beer (*ocisangua*), which is tasty, very tasty. Into that beer they throw some sweet-smelling medicine, as for instance *ocisangu*, *olukata*, *ocilombo*, and *okakonga*. That medicine helps that the stomach may not ache and that worms may not come. *Olukata* is useful for stopping diarrhoea. Should he not eat well, they put in *okakonga*. In giving him to drink they use a little piece of gourd. As with feeding him likewise, although he struggles they hold his little arms and legs and make him drink.' The chief purpose of the beer and the sweet-smelling medicines is to tempt the baby to eat and drink, for it is believed that a baby [127] is born with its senses of taste and smell fully developed. In case of more serious, or supposedly more serious, trouble, these simple remedies do not suffice and the diviner (*ocimbanda*) will be consulted.

'Should the baby be sick in the belly, making a noise *ekiiii*,

1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1940 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

child, they will say, They have bewitched him with *olosota*.[1] In going to the diviner they take a cock for the cure. They kill their cock, the diviner eats it, they (go) to the threshing-floor for the cure. That threshing-floor is holy and no one may pass over it unless in passing he spits out a little saliva and says, There may it stay, there. Only so may they pass on, even though they may be many, each person does just that.' The 'many' who go to the diviner are representatives of the family, for their presence is necessary not only for proper diagnosis but also to show their concern and good faith.

Babyhood Proper

(*From the second week until about the seventh month*)

The period of lying-in is terminated when the cord falls and the navel heals, but the second period only begins when the baby turns dark. This period begins with 'Breaking the pot' (*Oku ipaya ombia*). The reference is to the gourd or pot in which the beer and medicine have been kept. 'Breaking the pot', says one informant, 'means dividing the dark from the light.'

'When a child is first born he is perfectly pink and it is not possible to say whether he will be light or dark. When six or eight days have passed he begins to change and to get the skin with which he will grow. At that time they recognize whether the child will be light or dark. Then is the time when those who do not like to hold a pink baby will begin to take him up, for also it is then that his neck begins to be strong. Then too the baby begins to cause people to laugh. Should he be a boy, those who take him will say, Ah my husband are you well? Ha, how is the man? Then the parent will rejoice and say, Shucks, this man doesn't give any cloth at all. Should she be a girl, they will also say, How is my girl? The parent replies, She is quite well. The man then says, Where is a beer-jug for a man? The parent says, Shucks, your girl can't brew at all, she 's no good, they've just put her out of her house; they've just divorced her because she can't keep house properly.'

This period from about the eighth day until about the end of the sixth month is the period of babyhood proper. At night the baby sleeps with his mother and by day he is carried in a cloth on her back (*oku velekua*). When it is not raining his head may be seen

[1] *Olosota* (plural) are a wild fruit, hard and about the size of hazel-nuts, used for playing *ocela*.

1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

generally more resistant than those whom we know to-day. Some of the imported diseases have probably been with the Ovimbundu since they first encountered Europeans, others are more recent, but all seem to be more deadly to Africans than to Europeans. This is especially true of the lung complaints, against which the Ovimbundu have little resistance, and the manner of their life makes tuberculosis very difficult to check.

Diseases native to the region also constitute a great problem, notably malaria in its several forms, leprosy, bilharzia, yaws, goitre, nutritional diseases, &c. The medical staffs of the government services and of the missions are well aware of the magnitude of the problem. The resources at their command, however, are terribly inadequate. It is urgently necessary that resources be found and made available.

Religious Development. Before bringing this historical survey to a close it is necessary to take note of certain developments with regard to religion. It was noted in passing that representatives of the ruling families had, on occasion, returned to the lands of their exodus to worship their ancestors at the ancient shrines. From this it is evident that the ancestors of the ruling families became the gods of the kingdoms over which they ruled. The commoners kept their own ancestral deities, family by family. Special cults of various sorts have grown up. From the texts of a hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago it is evident that many of the religious practices of the Ovimbundu were then similar to those which are observed at the present time. Some practices described in those texts, on the other hand, seem to have ceased or to have been altered beyond recognition. The very presence of the Europeans must have affected the rites and their observance, for their attitudes, whether of approval or of disapproval, registered over so long a period, must have produced some effect.[1] Degrees of intensity of this European contact, varying from region to region, must have had their influence in the development of regional differences. Some such differences have been noted.[2]

[1] Battell records that the 'Jagas' would not let him witness certain rites. Pinheiro de Lacerda, writing in 1797, says that he burned more than one hundred *oratorios* called *chacapombo* (*Annaes Mar. e. Col.*, 1845, p. 491).

[2] W. H. Sanders put down to their closer contact with Europeans the fact that the king's councillors of Viye were not 'a very dignified set. . . . They seemed to have none of that decorum which prevails among the head men of Bailundu' (*Missionary Herald*, 1886, p. 143).

825 Observation of reptiles is a necessary self-protection as there are many poisonous snakes. The flesh of the python is eaten. Snake-
[524] skin and lizard-skin are occasionally used; for example, in covering a round, hard fruit in order to make a ball for playing a game.

When collecting lizards and snakes I found that each kind had a well-known name, though there was occasional disagreement among the men consulted.

Ocisangoko is a lizard (*Agama planiceps*) about ten inches long whose tail is covered with sharp spines. This reptile has colors of bright blue, red, and orange. *Osangu* is a large spinous gray lizard (*Agama atricoll*). *Ekangala* (*Gerrhosaurus nigrolineatus*) is a brilliantly colored lizard which burrows deeply into the ground.

Olutanjila is a long slender green snake which hides in trees to capture birds. *Ombandanjila* is a long gray-backed snake with a light green belly. The generic name for snake is *onyoha*. The python is *omoma*. The chameleon (*eloñailo*) seems to be feared, as the men and boys refuse to touch a dead one but always move it with sticks. There is a proverb to the effect that the chameleon though slow always gets there. The refusal to touch even dead reptiles is due to an exaggerated fear of being bitten. I could find no other reason.

824 Trees are of importance in connection with building houses and
313 wood-carving. The qualities of different timbers are well known to the Ovimbundu. For the main part, the collection of medicinal plants and their uses will be described in connection with the medicine-man. The following are the most common trees which are of economic importance.

Usia (pronounced *oosha*). This tree has an edible fruit the size of a walnut. The kernel is valued as a food.

Ombula. This tree provides wood which burns readily. The small skin-covered stools to be found in every hut are often made from this wood.

Uhenge. The fruit has a hard rind.

• [757] *Owindo*. This tree has a small acid fruit from which a medicine is made for the cure of painful menstruation.

Usilosilo. The leaf is compound and palmate. The fruit is black.

Usiombiambia. Bears a little red, oval fruit.

Usoiz. Has a large red fruit.

Usombo. Grows near streams. It has a fruit like that of *okalakula*, but smaller.

[223] *Uhulisenge*. Has a fruit like the berry of a coffee plant. The fruit is used for making mucilage which is used for capturing small birds.

Omanda. When this tree is small, the wood is springy, and is therefore useful for making bows. The wood of the older trees is burned for preparing charcoal which is used in the blacksmith's fire.

Omundu. This is an erect tree having no branches on the lower part. The wood is extensively used in building native huts.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Omua. A large tree having clusters of small white flowers which are visited by bees on account of their content of honey. The tree yields a hard wood from which charcoal is prepared. The bark and leaves yield a pigment which is used for dyeing cloth a yellowish brown. 824 313

Omui is valuable because it gives a hard wood used for the corner posts of houses. White ants do not attack this wood, which is therefore useful for making the uprights on which granaries are erected.

Okapalangala. A tree from which planks of hard red wood are obtained. These are used for making doors in village fences.

Omuna or *okanga* or *usamba.* These trees have small compound leaves which are very similar. The bark of the latter two is used as rope for binding the uprights and the crosspieces in the framework of native houses. *Ekanga* and *usamba* also yield a bark which is beaten into bark cloth in the Ngalangi district.

Ocipalo. The bark is used for binding posts, also for the fabrication of bark cloth.

Ungolo. The roots of this tree yield a dye for cloth. The leaves are said to have a value for curing sore eyes. The mother of a child afflicted with sore eyes chews the leaves, then spits into the child's eyes. [757]

Onpaya. Yields a wood used for making pestles and pounding sticks.

Omuke ("iron wood"). This tree has a hard wood which is used for the same purpose.

Onfunga. Gives a wood used in the making of houses, doors, and beehives.

Omone. A large tree which gives planks for building purposes.

Usanje. Yields a useful red timber.

Ulondanganda. A tree with very rough bark. The word *nganda* means a crocodile. This is the tree which even a crocodile can climb. [757]

Onganja. A tree which yields a fruit having a value as a purgative. The antelope is said to be fond of the fruits of this tree.

Ocilumbeolumba. Gives a resinous fluid which is used in the preparation of lime for snaring birds. [223]

Ulumba. This word is derived from the word *ulumba*, meaning shade. The *embala* (native capital) of Ngalangi is surrounded by such trees.

Omia. A tree which produces yellow flowers in September. The fruit is not edible but oil is made from it.

Okalu. A tree having fragrant flowers like those of honeysuckle. The thick bark is used in making mats.

Ocese. A soft wood which is easily whittled with a knife. The figures from Bailundu (Plate XXI, Fig. 5) are often carved from this wood.

Umbolombolo. A soft wood which is not very strong.

Umbanganda. A small tree which produces bright red fruits. These are used by women for the manufacture of bead necklaces.

Ocilasi. The wood is used for the heads of arrows for shooting birds. This timber is used in the building of pigpens. The branches have projections which are said to guard (*okulava*, to guard) the occupants of the pen.

Jiata. From the roots of this tree a [illegible] for pulmonary complaints is made.

Ukua. This is the baobab, whose habitat is the dry regions. Some of the trees have enormous girth. They are leafless for a great part of the year. The long fruits make gourds. The seeds in the fruits are bitter.

Utantua (pronounced *ootandwa*). From the wood the Ovimbundu make wooden platters and spoons used for serving mush from the large cooking pot.

Onjilili. This tree yields a hard red wood which takes a lustrous polish. For this reason the wood is employed for making ornamental sticks and clubs.

Upondonjamba. This small tree has roots which girls use for making ankle-bands.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

755 man, and fastened to the wall, was a strip of bark cloth painted with white circles. These recorded the number of times the patient came for treatment.

278 757 At Ngalangi there was no difficulty in obtaining information respecting plants used medicinally. Each of three medicine-men returned with a number of roots and stems which they readily described. *Okakamba* and *okapelangalo* are roots that cure "big head." This disease, which is rare in white people, begins with blood blisters in the mouth; these may spread to the intestines and cause death. *Okayenje* is a root that induces vomiting; it is also a purgative to free a patient from worms. *Olutikitiki* is given to a woman soon after her baby is born. *Kalungdumona* is a plant having a purple flower. If the root is pounded and drunk in water it acts as an aperient. *Okumbiasoko*, when pounded and placed on the fire, restores a person after fainting; the head of the patient is held in the smoke. To a violent maniac the root *usonge* is given, pounded in water and mixed with maize beer. At Ngalangi a man who had been subject to homicidal mania was sitting on the ground quietly with his hands tied behind his back. I was informed that *usonge* was making him better. *Ocinyeni* is a bark that is chewed to remedy stomachache. *Kosamba* is a plant used to cure people who fall into the fire; it is also a remedy for toothache. The action of this drug *kosamba* causes vomiting and evacuation.

Cilendaluka is pounded in water and smeared on the patient's body as a treatment following the internal application of *kosamba*. *Mbundakataka* is a root that is pounded and applied externally to cure sores on the lips.

278 In addition to the plants just mentioned the following are important:

Ocimbinga. This plant, whose name means "the big horn," is probably *Strophanthus*. It is used in the treatment of worms and chest colds.

Ocipumbulu. This is a trailing herb whose leaves when pulverized are said to be a cure for bad sores.

Ocindiambala and *oluaseka*. These are used to give to women who are suffering in difficult delivery. *Ongolo* sometimes takes the place of these drugs. The bark of *ongolo* is pounded in boiling water which is contained in a basin over which the woman sits. Use of the bark in this way is a protection against injuries resulting from childbirth.

Omondolua. This is good for headaches and whooping cough. The roots are boiled and mixed with sweet beer.

Okalolulo-lohala. This is said to be used in cases of dysentery. At Elende it is used for curing skin diseases.

Okalle. This is used in cases of snake bite, swellings, and stings.

164 In connection with the foregoing study of the native pharmacopoeia it will be of interest to consider some maladies to which the Ovim-

164 Deformities resulting from burns are frequent. Cooking pots [732] are unstably placed on logs which form the fire, and, in addition to this, people sleep very near the fire. There is no cerebro-spinal fever. Pneumonia is very common; the result is often fatal. Weakness of the heart is only occasional. Varicose veins are rare. There is no appendicitis.

One cannot fail to notice the prevalence of tropical ulcers among the Ovimbundu. These occur most frequently on the tibia. The [757] big sloughing ulcer makes a large hole which the native fills with clay and a pulp of leaves. Sometimes a bark is pounded to a pulp and used in this way. These ulcers are very obstinate even under skilled treatment. Often after the wound has been healed it will break out again when irritated by the slightest injury. Medical [732] opinion is divided as to the cause of these ulcers. Jiggers are a cause of deformation of the toes, which sometimes fall off or have to be amputated. Cancer is not usual in people under sixty years of age. Superficial cancer is the most common form.

515 Water, even when procurable, is sparingly used by the Ovimbundu. The hands and face may receive a perfunctory wash each day, but the entire body seldom receives this attention.

757 Cupping was observed on two occasions, but I think the operations were performed by the mothers of the children concerned, and not by a medicine-man. The method of using the horns or gourds is illustrated (Plate LXXXVI, Fig. 1). After incisions had been made the cups were applied. The operator sucked the pointed end of the cup, so creating a vacuum, which was maintained by pushing forward with the tip of the tongue a small ball of wax. This wax filled the hole at the pointed end of the cupping horn. The people shown in the photograph are Vachokue, but the method is the same among the Ovimbundu.

At Elende there was a sweat bath in the form of a hole in the ground containing a heap of stones. The stones are heated in a fire, then cold water is thrown over them so that steam arises to the patient, who crouches above the hole covered with a blanket.

In the Vasele country, also among the Ovimbundu at Elende, I examined corporeal incisions other than tribal marks. The explanation was to the effect that the making of cuts cured pain (Plates XXIV, Fig. 3; LXXVI, Fig. 2).

RAIN-MAKING

791 The rain-maker (*upuli*) is a medicine-man who has specialized in this function. The *upuli*, who was an Ocivokue of Ngongo, and

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

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TREATING SICK WOMAN, VACHOKUE, CANGAMBA

Fig. 1. Medicine-man stroking patient's spine. Fig. 2. Preparing for ablution of face

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

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VACHOKUE, EAST ANGOLA

Fig. 1. Cupping operation, Nyango, Ngalangi. Fig. 2. Group, Mona Kalandala

[p. 440]

4:Dorsey E-4, 5 (no date)1899 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Still another form of fetish for protection are two small images also known as *ovitekas*. They, like the other *ovitekas* described above, are of wood, but are rudely carved from two round pieces of wood about sixteen inches long. No attempt has been made to represent the human form in any detail, only the face, neck, and arms being indicated. The face of both images has been besmeared with some reddish black pigment. These were placed where the path to the village branches off to the caravan road. A small hut before which they stood was built for them, about two feet square, and between two and three feet high, with a thatched grass roof. Within was a shelf on which from time to time was placed food, corn, and a small gourd of beer. This was done to appease certain spirits which were supposed to be angry with the village and were causing sickness.

For the so-called poison test three medicines are employed. The first and most common is known as the *ombambu*, a drug obtained from the country east of the Quanza River, and represented in the collection by a piece of bark. It has the property of a powerful spinal irritant, and it is said that a very small quantity will produce death. There is a current belief among the Ovimbundu that if a bird alights upon the *ombambu* tree it will fall down dead. The second drug, or *ombambu*, employed in the poison test is obtained from the Bihe country, and is represented by several roots. It is taken in the form of a decoction. The third test is known as *onsunga*. This is a mixture of powdered herbs, and is obtained from the country of the Ganguellas. With these three drugs should be mentioned a small gourd, *okopo*, used by the ocimbanda in mixing the medicines, and from which during the poison test the parties drink. The test medicines are stirred with the foot of a small antelope. Occasion for the administering of the poison may arise in various ways. Frequently one person will accuse another of being a witch. The accused may deny it, and appeal to the poison test to prove his innocency. They go to the chief, who calls an ocimbanda, who mixes up a concoction in a gourd, and both the accuser and accused drink. If the draughts make one sick and he vomits, he is acquitted; and if the other one becomes very sick and does not vomit, he is said to be the witch. This same test is often appealed to in other matters where one affirms and another denies. A man may drink by proxy, that is, he may have a friend drink the poison in his stead, or, more frequently, a slave drinks for his master.

Finally, it must be noticed that the ocimbandu is also a medicine-man. He undoubtedly possesses some really valuable remedies, but there is so much of the fetishistic cult bound up in the administering of the remedies that when they do help a person the credit of

[Cf. p. 185. -- Analyst]

4:Dorsey E-4, 5 (no date)1899 FP13 Mbundu FP13

791 757 the cure is given to the charms and incantations. Of the medicines contained in the collection I shall only mention four: The first is a love medicine, *ekulo*, a powdered mixture of seeds. When a wife becomes jealous of the other wives of her husband, she complains to her mother, who advises her to cook a chicken and in the broth to place some of this medicine, which, when her husband eats thereof, will compel him forever to love her above all the other wives. The second remedy is an emetic, *asangu*. This is frequently used, as, for example, when in the poison test a person becomes very sick, and the guilt has become fully established, the doctor will administer an emetic to save life. In cases of difficult labor, the woman is given a small piece of the bark of the *oluvanga* to chew. For rheumatism, *ovihata*, a mixed powder called *omatoli*, is used.

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